

Woodbury City Update

March 2021 • Volume 22, No. 3



Loan programs offer opportunities for home ownership and reinvestment

A guiding principle of Woodbury's 2040 Comprehensive Plan is to "encourage the development of a diversity of housing to accommodate people of all ages, income levels and family status." With respect to housing affordability in the community, Woodbury's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) offers two loan programs that can help income-qualified households purchase their first home or renovate a home that they already own.

Woodbury First-Time Homeownership Program

The Woodbury HRA has operated its First-Time Homeownership Program since 2009 providing low-interest \$25,000 deferred loans to income qualified first-time homebuyers. The structure of the program can help a homeowner save \$250 to \$400 per month given the deferred nature of the principle, the low interest rate, and the

fact that the Woodbury loan will help reduce or even eliminate the need for private mortgage insurance.

Following a discussion at its Oct. 21, 2020, workshop discussion about the city's update to its Housing Action Plan, the Woodbury HRA authorized a new component to the First-Time Homeownership Program that offers a 0% interest rate to first-generation homebuyers, making an already effective affordable housing tool even more helpful to first-generation buyers.

The Woodbury HRA prioritizes the stewardship of its public dollars and requires full manual underwriting of all loan applications. While this necessitates a 30-day review period for all loan applications, it has also led to a default rate of less than 1% – a number far lower than commercial lending standards.

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Sign up to receive emergency calls from the city

Do you want to be among the first to receive important emergency messages from the city? If so, you should sign up to receive emergency calls and text messages on your mobile phone.

The City of Woodbury, in conjunction with Washington County, uses CodeRED, a high-speed telephone calling system, to notify local residents and businesses about emergency situations. The system allows the city to send critical communications to the entire city or to targeted areas within the city in a matter of minutes.

The system also can be used to send important "non-emergency" messages which are optional; residents can opt out of receiving them. However, in most instances, the system is used in emergency situations where rapid and accurate information to residents are essential for life safety.

The system is not used for weather warnings, but may be used for follow-up information such as evacuations or shelter locations.

How to receive alerts

If you reside or own property, including a business, within Woodbury, you are urged to sign up for CodeRED messages and ensure that you receive any emergency notifications.

You also can opt in to receive calls directly to your mobile phone, text messages, and/or email alerts. You can register as many devices as you wish

to as many addresses as needed. If you have a winter home in another state, you can link your Woodbury home's profile to your winter home's profile, provided your winter home's jurisdiction also uses CodeRED.

In addition, a free CodeRED app is available for many smartphones. You can use it to view alerts issued in different CodeRED service areas.

How it works

City staff accesses CodeRED via a secure portal on the Internet and marks a call area. Telephone numbers are matched up electronically to these addresses through the use of geographical information systems. A message is sent via the telephone with information about the incident and possibly instructions for action to be taken. The message is played when answered by a live person or an answering machine; the system makes three attempts to connect to each number.

The calling number for CodeRED emergencies will display as 800-419-5000. The calling number for CodeRED general messages will display as 855-969-4636. If you would like to hear the last message delivered to your phone, simply dial the number back. Users also may add these numbers as "contacts" in their phones, so they recognize the call is coming from the CodeRED system.

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 **CodeRED™**



Council Perspective

By Mayor Anne Burt

New type of emergency responder joining Public Safety

The Woodbury Public Safety Department is welcoming a new kind of emergency responder to its team. At our Jan. 27 meeting, the City Council approved the purchase of an unmanned aerial system (UAS) for emergency response purposes. I want to tell you more about how we intend to use this important new emergency responder device.

A UAS is an unmanned aircraft that is controlled remotely without a pilot on board. Instead, a certified pilot on the ground operates the device.

There are many benefits of using an UAS in public safety. Public Safety officials can quickly deploy them in search and rescue situations or use them to capture a comprehensive view of natural disasters, fire scenes, and crash and crime scene investigations. Police also can use it, in limited cases, to service warrants. Other city departments will also be able to use the device for tasks such as infrastructure inspections.

UAS improves emergency response

Responding to certain types of incidents from the air increases the probability of success and can reduce the number of personnel needed on the ground.

We currently rely on outside resources for air support, primarily through the Minnesota State Patrol helicopter, the Washington County UAS, and other mutual aid relationships in the county. While these partnerships are effective, the additional drive and flight times often take longer to get eyes in the sky, delaying our response. In addition, we cannot solely rely on another agency to provide this type of support all of the time.

Throughout the year, our Public Safety team responds to situations where a UAS could play a critical

role, such as locating lost persons or fleeing suspects, or gaining the scope of a grass fire. These incidents often occur in or around difficult terrain, where the UAS can cover an area much more efficiently than a responder on the ground can. Applications like this can help save lives, save time and protect property.

We will not be using the UAS to conduct random patrols of the city from the sky. We are following state law and Federal Aviation Administration rules in implementing this program, just like our neighboring communities with similar programs. There are privacy restrictions in the state law about using this technology in residential areas and they are more restrictive for these devices than for similar Google Streetview technology.

When our new UAS is needed in Public Safety, an officer will request the resource and a certified pilot and/or a supervisor will be consulted to determine if use of the UAS is appropriate.

This is a cost-effective way to enhance emergency response. No new staff positions were added to support the program. Two current police officers have been certified as pilots, and we hope to certify and train at least five more officers as we move ahead. In terms of cost, the UAS purchase price was \$39,000. There will be nominal upkeep costs (i.e., battery maintenance), which we will have a better understanding of once the program is up and running for a while. We are also looking into software to aid in flight logging and data management, but do not expect that to exceed a few thousand dollars. It should be noted, however, that one UAS operator could replace several people searching on the ground.

A department member will serve as the UAS program coordinator and will be responsible for the management of the UAS program. The program coordinator will ensure that our procedures conform to current laws, regulations and best practices. Notification of use and operation will be recorded, reported to the state annually and be included with the department performance measures.

About the technology

We have a commercial quality unit that allows up to 55 minutes of flight time on a single charge. Compared to hobby-level devices, Woodbury's UAS can carry more weight (i.e., a high-quality camera that includes thermal imaging), features improved resistance to weather elements such as wind and temperature, and allows for creating flight plans. It also has cameras and sensors to allow for live mission recording.

Public input

State law requires government entities to provide an opportunity for public comment related to UAS purchase and policy. This information is available for review at woodburymn.gov/uas. We solicited for this input in December and received some comments from the community related to privacy, data retention, use/deployment, cost, public notification, and training and partnerships. Public Safety staff and the City Council are reviewing the feedback from the public and will determine if additional changes are merited.

We are always looking for means to enhance the safety of our residents as well as our staff. The addition of the new UAS emergency responder is an excellent example of this effort. I am confident its deployment will help us more efficiently protect our community.

Sign up...from page 1

CodeRED is just one communications tool the city uses to share information with the public. Depending on the event, updates may also be available via the city's website, City Update newsletter, InTouch email service, the city's social media accounts, government access cable TV channels and local media.

How to register

To ensure emergency notices reach residents and utility users, accurate and up-to-date information is essential. The CodeRED system uses the most recent information entered for an address and overwrites previous information associated with an address. The best way to manage contact information is to create a profile so that the user can continually make updates as desired.

If you are not an existing subscriber, you can self-register by visiting the city's website at woodburymn.gov/codered or texting keyword "WashingtonMN" to 99411. You may register as many mobile phone numbers and email addresses as you desire.

Persons without internet service can call Woodbury Public Safety at 651-714-3600 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. for assistance with registration.

If you have any questions about the CodeRED system, contact the Woodbury Public Safety Department at 651-714-3600 or police@woodburymn.gov.

The Woodbury newsletter is published 10 times per year by the City of Woodbury and mailed to all residents and businesses. Send comments to: Woodbury City Hall, 8301 Valley Creek Road, Woodbury, MN 55125-3330. Phone: 651-714-3500. Email: jason.egerstrom@woodburymn.gov.

Mayor: Anne Burt. Council Members: Andrea Date, Steve Morris, Jennifer Santini and Kim Wilson. City Administrator: Clint Gridley. Communications Manager: Jason Egerstrom.

The City of Woodbury is subject to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In accordance with the act, the Woodbury newsletter is available in other formats. Call Jason Egerstrom, 651-714-3500; TDD: 651-714-3568.

Market value notices set to hit mailboxes in March

Property value notices are expected to be mailed to property owners during the last week of March by Washington County. Like in previous years, the valuation notices will be mailed with property tax statements for taxes payable in 2021.

The “2021 Notice of Valuation and Classification for Taxes Payable in 2022” will indicate the market value established this year on Jan. 2. This market value is the approximate amount for which a property could sell and is the basis for your 2022 taxes.

Determining Market Value

Each year, the county assessor’s office reviews the assessed market value of all property to determine whether changes in the local real estate market require a change in assessed values. Real estate sales are verified and studied based on the location, age, and style of home and quality of construction to determine these market adjustments.

If property owners question their 2021 estimated market value or classification listed on their “Notice of Valuation” form, they should:

1. Contact the assessor’s office.

Property owners who have questions or concerns regarding the market value set for their property are encouraged to contact the property appraiser assigned to their area by calling 651-430-6175. The appraiser will review the property data and sales information with you and, if necessary, schedule an interior review of the property. A large majority of concerns can be resolved through this administrative review without the need for a formal appeal.

OR you may attend any of the two regional Open Book meetings scheduled by the county (see 2021 schedule in adjacent box). Your appeal can be made in person, through a letter, or through a representative authorized by you. The Open Book process offers an informal setting for property owners as well as several scheduling options.

2. Appear before the County Board of Appeal and Equalization.

Property owners who are not satisfied by speaking with the assessor’s office or with the action

taken at the Open Book meeting may appear before the County Board of Appeal, consisting of elected county commissioners, the county auditor, and/or appointed officials. You must contact the assessor’s office at 651-430-6175 by Wednesday, May 5, to be placed on the agenda.

3. Appeal to Minnesota State Tax Court.

The alternative method of appeal is bypassing the first two steps listed above. It involves making an appeal directly to the Minnesota Tax Court. The deadline to appeal to the Minnesota State Tax Court is April 30 of the year that the taxes are due. That means if a property owner wishes to appeal taxes due in 2021, they must file an appeal with the court by April 30, 2021. For more information, visit the tax court website at mn.gov/tax-court or call 651-539-3260.

If you have any questions regarding the appraisal process or the 2021 market value, contact the Washington County Assessor’s Office at 651-430-6175 or visit the Washington County Assessor’s Office website at washington.minnesotaassessors.com.

Open Book meetings set for market value appeals

Woodbury property owners can attend any of the following Open Book meetings to appeal their market value or property classification. All Open Book meetings will take place at the Washington County Government Center this year due to the pandemic and will only be held if conditions allow.

- Wednesday, April 21, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Washington County Government Center in Stillwater, 14949 62nd Street North
- Thursday, April 22, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Washington County Government Center in Stillwater, 14949 62nd Street North

Property owners who have questions or concerns are strongly encouraged to contact the property appraiser responsible for their area as a first step. The number to call is 651-430-6175.

Loan programs...from page 1

The Woodbury HRA contracts with NeighborWorks Home Partners to perform underwriting and application analyses. For more information, visit woodburyloans.com.

Neighborhood Reinvestment Fund

The Neighborhood Reinvestment Fund is a companion program to the First-Time Homeownership Program and provides 3% interest loans to income-qualified borrowers. The loan program was designed to ensure that Woodbury ages with grace in the coming years as well as offering the ability to provide a resource to a resident as the city works through code enforcement activities. Eligible projects include renovation that remedies a code violation as well as exterior improvements such as new roofs, siding, windows or interior

improvements that would increase the value of the home. Also eligible are any improvements that address health and safety, habitability, energy conservation or accessibility. Ineligible improvements include recreational improvements, working capital, payments for owner’s labor, debt service or refinancing existing debts.

By way of a real-life example, Ken R., a homeowner in the Park Hills neighborhood of Woodbury recently used the Neighborhood Reinvestment Fund to replace the 1960s-era windows in his house.

“The program allowed me to get a second mortgage at a low interest rate to cover the costs of the improvements, which made my home more energy efficient and livable,” Ken explained. “I installed eight new windows, a new

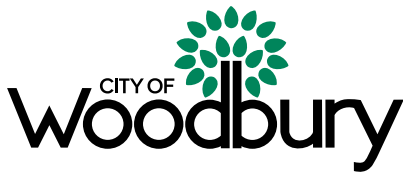
exterior door and gutter screens as part of the program. Without this funding, I would have been waiting for years to make the improvements to my home. I cannot say for sure that my heating bill is lower, but I know now that my bedroom no longer has drafty windows that made it uncomfortable when there was a breeze or in extreme temperature conditions.”

Ken recommends other residents consider if the program also is a good fit for them.

“Everyone I spoke with was very helpful in walking me through the program steps and details,” he added. “I would definitely refer the program to other Woodbury residents. It does take some effort and organization as a homeowner to work through the steps

of the program, but I think it is worth the time and effort.”

Woodbury’s HRA (the HRA’s board is composed of the Mayor and Councilmembers) continues to find success with its loan programs it launched in 2009, having since issued 258 loans in the total amount of roughly \$6.135 million through the end of 2020. In addition to helping provide housing affordability within the community, the programs described above help ensure that Woodbury employers have access to the workforce they require while also providing access to capital to residents in need of making repairs and updates to their homes.



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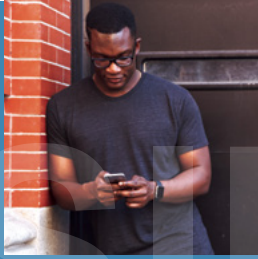
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Homeowner loan opportunities

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Summer recreation registration begins March 24

Summer play is on its way! Discover a wide-variety of programs, classes, camps and community events designed to boost creativity, explore new interests, build new friendships and, most importantly, have fun!

From classic events such as the Coin Carnival to new activities such as the Zombie Apocalypse Chase, there are plenty of ways to enjoy the summer.

More details will be available in the city's summer recreation programs brochure, which will be mailed the week of March 15. Online registration for summer recreation programs begins March 24.

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HERO Center range reopens

The indoor shooting range at the Health Emergency Response Occupations (HERO) Training Center in Cottage Grove has reopened to the public.

Twelve, 50-yard lanes are available for rent between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturdays and 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sundays. The public is encouraged to log on to herocentermn.org/shooting-range to reserve lanes, fill out waiver forms and find pricing. Walk-ins also are accepted.

Safety officers are always inside the range during public shooting hours to help maintain a safe, family-friendly range environment.

Civilian firearms courses

Civilian firearms courses for youth and adults of all abilities are offered



through the HERO Center. Visit herocentermn.org/civilian-training-academy for details and to register.

The HERO Center is located at 10125 85th Street South in Cottage Grove, adjacent to the Cottage Grove City Hall and Public Safety Building. The facility is jointly owned and operated by the cities of Cottage Grove and Woodbury. For more information, visit herocentermn.org or call 651-458-2811.

Community EXPO postponed to Oct. 2

The annual spring Woodbury Community EXPO sponsored by the Woodbury Area Chamber of Commerce has been postponed to Saturday, Oct. 2, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's expo, which is free and family-friendly, will take place at HealthEast Sports Center.

Typically, more than 130 local businesses and non-profit groups participate, promoting their companies and organizations. There also will be entertainment and demonstrations

throughout the day.

The city has a booth at the event where attendees can learn about city facilities, services, seasonal employment, recreation programs, development projects, water quality, water efficiency opportunities and car seat safety.

For more information, call the Woodbury Area Chamber of Commerce at 651-578-0722 or email chamber@woodburychamber.org.

